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29 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR : Chief, Intelligence Staff, Office of Special Activities

SUBJECT : Meeting with the Secretary of Defense, 16 October 1962,
to Consider Stepped-up Reconnaissance of Cuba

1. Following the discovery by SAC Mission 3101 on 14 October of MRBM/IRBM installations in Western Cuba, a meeting was hurriedly convened at 1300 hours 16 October in the office of the Secretary of Defense for the purpose of considering a program of stepped-up reconnaissance of the entire island. Present at the meeting were the following individuals: the Secretary of Defense; the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Gilpatric; General Marshall S. Carter, ADCI; the Vice Chief of the Air Staff, General McKee; General Carroll, the Director of DIA; General Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Dr. Charyk, D/NRO; Dr. Scoville, DD/R; Captain Grayson, USN; Colonel Ledford, AD/OSA; Dr. Whelon, AD/OSI; Colonel Ralph D. Steakley, JRC; and the undersigned.

2. Mr. McNamara chaired the discussion which took place for the most part during luncheon for the principals in attendance. His questions were primarily directed toward Colonel Steakley, General Carroll, Dr. Charyk, and General McKee and centered on the question of the number of available U-2 aircraft from both Agency and SAC sources, as well as the problems connected with mounting a maximum reconnaissance effort, designed in the Secretary's words to "cover every inch of the Island of Cuba".

3. Mr. McNamara said that he felt the question of political approvals was no longer a factor to be considered, and that in order to obtain a full inventory of existing offensive missile systems in Cuba, he wanted the greatest number of missions possible flown in the shortest time so as to permit him to give the President an accurate idea of what the threat to the United States was. When reminded of the weather factor in Cuba at this time of year, he said that he wanted intelligence coverage of literally every piece of Cuban real estate,

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and that if a mission returned with any cloud coverage at all over land not covered up to that point, he wanted another mission to be flown without delay. The whole question of numbers of flights approved was left in a rather open-ended fashion, but Mr. McNamara did say that he was authorizing at this meeting a total of six flights to be flown on Wednesday, 17 October, with another six flights to follow on the 18th. There was then considerable discussion about the saturation of existing processing facilities for this magnitude of reconnaissance, and together with Dr. Charyk, the Secretary agreed that since the Naval photo interpretation center at Suitland was backlogged as a result of the missions flown Sunday and Monday, 14 and 15 October, additional missions would be processed at the Air Force center at Westover, Mass., the Eastman-Kodak facility in Rochester, New York, and finally the SAC processing facility at Laughlin Air Force Base, Del Rio, Texas. It was agreed that if all of these facilities became saturated, consideration would then be given to farming some of the work out to other centers such as March Field, California.

4. Colonel Ledford mentioned briefly the camera tests then being conducted at Edwards Air Force Base by the CIA Detachment, utilizing a new two-speed shutter engineered by HYCON in conjunction with SO-130 film as being potentially productive as far as improving the caliber of technical intelligence on Cuban missiles was concerned. Mr. McNamara then suggested that if this shutter/film combination could be flown as early as the 17th of October, he believed it should be paired with a SAC flight, using the "B" camera configuration film over the same track so as to give a useful comparison of results. He was reminded by the undersigned that if this capability were successful, there was a limitation on its utilization brought about by the small amount of SO-130 film which was available from Eastman. He was advised that at that time an order had been placed twenty-four hours previously with Eastman for a total of 120,000 feet of SO-130 film cut and spooled for the "B" camera rig, and that this order was not expected to be delivered until 11 November 1962. The question of the camera tests was left somewhat inconclusive, but with the understanding that if the test could be flown in timely fashion, it should be accomplished at the earliest possible date. Conservative estimates were given the Secretary of Defense by the undersigned as to the improvement in resolution. These estimates were stated to be on the order of 10 percent, but with a considerable improvement in enlargement capability above and beyond this figure.

5. The Secretary then discussed with Colonel Steakley the question of low level F-101 reconnaissance flights over Cuban missile bases along the format

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utilized in the Far East under Project [REDACTED] It was clear from the discussion that he was not inhibited in considering this as a possible solution for the technical intelligence problem, but no firm conclusion was reached either as to numbers of aircraft to be utilized or routes to be flown. He then turned quickly to the question of how many aircraft would be required to knock out each of the Cuban missile sites thus far identified, as well as the number of strikes needed to "take care of every MIG on the Island". Colonel Steakley suggested that this question could best be answered by General Power, who was at that very moment en route from Omaha to Washington to join with the Secretary of Defense in considering the whole question of reconnaissance and air strikes against the missile sites. On this note the meeting concluded.

JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.
Deputy Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

cc: DD/R
Mr. Elder

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